The Dewan then opened the Assembly with the following:—

ADDRESS.

"MEMBERS OF THE SRI MULAM POPULAR ASSEMBLY,

Under the gracious command of His Highness the Maha Raja, it is my pleasing privilege to welcome you to the nineteenth session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

2. Copies of the Administration Report for the year 1097 M. E. have already been placed in your hands, from which you will learn in detail of the activities of the several departments of the State during that year. I here propose to explain the more salient among the measures that have either been adopted or are in process of adoption since the last session, and incidentally to state how some of the steps taken have paved the way for the introduction of other and newer measures in extension of the policy outlined in my opening Address to the members of this Assembly at its seventeenth session. The classification and arrangement of the subjects on which I propose to address you will be substantially the same as those adopted last year.

3. Land.—In my two previous Addresses I invited your attention to the neglected condition of survey and land records and the need for an organised effort to bring these items of work up to date, both in the interests of the cultivators and of the Government. The old staff of taluk surveyors was transferred as an integral part of the Survey Department. Three parties were constituted for the conduct of *puduval* survey operations, while a body of young men, mostly graduates, were given a course of training in survey and posted to most of the taluks for bringing land records up to date. Some of the surveyors were also detailed for the verification and re-fixing of theodolite stations, which was a necessary preliminary to the land records maintenance work entrusted to the Assistant Tahsildars. Last year, I expressed my disappointment at the work turned out by all these agencies. There were initial difficulties, no doubt, to contend against; but the Assistant Tahsildars evinced lack of enthusiasm for field work and the surveyors showed an inadequate outturn. The question of increasing the efficiency of these agencies engaged the attention of the Government, and as a first step they were purged of such of their members as were found most inefficient and indifferent. Owing to the absence of a clear division of responsibility between the Superintendent of Survey and his Assistant, the work of co-ordination and supervision was found to suffer in efficiency. To remove this defect, the Assistant Superintendent of Survey was designated Superintendent of Land Records and placed in exclusive charge of the land records maintenance staff, while the Superintendent of Survey was left to concentrate his attention on the *puduval* survey staff. The outcome of this measure has been an improvement in the outturn of both land records and *puduval* survey work. The outturn of the *puduval* survey parties improved during 1097 by about 50 per cent., while the disposal of encroachments detected and of *puduvals* surveyed by the land records staff brought in a revenue of Rs. 1,33,179 during the year against Rs. 99,848 in 1096.

4. The work connected with the disposal of *puduval* and *pokkuvaravu* cases pertains mainly to the Tahsildars. The outturn in 1097 under both these heads was unsatisfactory and the explanations offered are not altogether acceptable. Nor is there much reason to congratulate the Tahsildars on their work under the special head of assignment of lands to the depressed classes, for which facilities have, as you know, been created and the importance of which has been impressed upon them in more than one recent G. O. Of the 4,431 applications received from the members of these classes and pending disposal in 1097, it is reported that only 590 ended in the actual assignment of lands, while 2,253 were rejected and the balance left undisposed of. The large proportion of rejected applications and the heavy

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pendency of undisposed of applications at the close of the year are the most unsatisfactory features of the work. It is possible that a good many applications related to lands which have to be reserved for public or communal purposes ; but had the Tahsildars devoted better attention to this work, they could have helped the applicants to substitute in their place lands the assignment of which is unobjectionable.

5. The creation of a separate department for the administration of Devaswoms and State Charities was taken advantage of to reduce the number of taluks from 34 to 30, and to take a further step in the direction of the separation of judicial and executive functions by relieving 25 Tahsildars of the work of trying criminal cases, the number of Stationary Second Class Magistrates being slightly increased and criminal work redistributed among them. Relief from the administration of Devaswoms and the trial of criminal cases gives the Tahsildars the advantage of uniformity in the nature of their duties and opportunities to concentrate attention on their legitimate work of improving the revenue administration of the State. The separation of Devaswoms from the Land Revenue Department should afford considerable relief to the Dewan Peishkars also. The Government hope that the Dewan Peishkars, who are now free from the administration of Devaswoms which consumed a substantial portion of their time and distracted their attention very frequently, would see that the Tahsildars so supervise and co-ordinate the work of the Assistant Tahsildars and the village staff connected with the land records and survey establishments as to make the land revenue administration in the current and future years really efficient.

6. When the land revenue administration of the State was remodelled and the *Land Revenue Manual* was compiled by the late Rao Bahadur R. Mahadeva Aiyar, that officer was of the opinion that the system of land revenue accounts introduced by him would obviate the necessity for an annual *jamabandi* or determination of the land revenue demand in all its details and the annual overhauling of the village and taluk land revenue accounts which the fixation of such demand presupposes. Experience has belied the optimism of Mr. Mahadeva Aiyar in this respect, and one of the vital defects of the present land revenue administration of the State is found to be the absence of an accurate annual fixation of the land revenue demand and the consequent scope for leakage in land revenue, not to speak of the delay in the recovery of even ascertained dues. It is under contemplation to institute an annual *jamabandi* of land revenue, as in the sister State of Cochin, with effect from the current year, and instructions will shortly issue in the matter. This *jamabandi*, however, can only be conducted by a revenue officer superior in rank to the Tahsildar, and it need hardly be stated that the performance of that work by the Peishkar personally in every one of the taluks comprising his Division is a physical impossibility. In view of this and in view also of the great desirability of avoiding a breach in the continuity of revenue experience in the several grades of land revenue officers, it is proposed to vest in the Division Assistants the powers of Peishkars in the disposal of certain definite items of land revenue work such as *puduval*, *poramboke* and *karampathippu*, within their respective jurisdictions, and to entrust them also with the conduct of the *jamabandi* of a couple of taluks every year. With this object, the number of Division Assistants has been slightly raised and their magisterial jurisdiction has been suitably revised. Government trust that the association of Division Assistants with superior land revenue work in the manner detailed above would conduce to their becoming better Peishkars when they are elevated to that position and increasing the efficiency of land revenue administration.

7. Rules 7 and 13 of the Rules issued under the Land Conservancy Regulation, IV of 1091, having been found to work hardship, they were revised from the beginning of 1098, with the result that prohibitory assessment is now levied only on *porambokes* the occupation of which is really objectionable. Such assessment is imposed only on land and not also on the trees standing thereon; it is limited to a maximum of 5 times the ordinary assessment; and the levy of arrears of assessment, whether ordinary or prohibitory, is also limited to a period of 5 years.

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8 Experience has shown that the disposal of encroachments detected by Assistant Tahsildars on *porambokes* in charge of the P. W. D., such as roads and water and drainage courses, is considerably hampered by the absence of co-ordination between the work of that and the Land Revenue Department, and it has also been found that these two important classes of communal *porambokes*—especially the latter—are not now subject to any organised system of control by the P. W. D. Measures have recently been adopted for removing both these evils. While it has been laid down that it is the first care of the P. W. D. to determine and demarcate the limits of water-ways over which encroachments should never be permitted, instructions have been issued which will secure prompt reporting by the P. W. D. subordinates of all encroachments on *porambokes* in their charge, side by side with similar reporting by the subordinate revenue staff, and it has been ordered that joint inspections of these encroachments should be made by the superior officers of the two departments and an understanding come to on the spot, as far as possible, as to the desirability or otherwise of permitting and regularising such encroachments. It is hoped that, as a result of these orders, it would be possible to bring down the heavy pendency of encroachment cases.

9. With a view to increase the area under paddy cultivation in the State, Government have ordered that blocks of swamps and other lands suitable for paddy cultivation within reserved forests should be thrown open for such cultivation without detriment to the interests of forest conservancy, and in pursuance of this scheme they have already appointed mixed committees of officials and non-officials possessing local knowledge, in the taluks of Peermade, Devicolam, Pattanapuram and Kottarakara, to inspect the several reserved forests within those taluks and prepare lists of available lands fit for the cultivation of paddy. It is hoped that this measure, the need for which has been repeatedly advocated at successive sessions of this Assembly, would go a great way towards the expansion of the area under paddy cultivation and the increased output of paddy so necessary for consumption in the State.

10. Government have, for some time past, been considering the advisability of organising a land colonisation scheme for the State. They believe that the large extent of arable lands still available in the country and the large sizes of the block comprising them would render a scheme of the kind practicable. They feel that the promotion of such a scheme would, to some extent, remedy the evils of the far too literary character of the education now imparted to the youth of the country and would help to divert their attention from comparatively fruitless pursuits to the more profitable extraction, from land, of what it is capable of yielding. It may be observed, in passing, that land in this country is more responsive to the plough than in countries less favoured by nature and rainfall. The essence of the scheme is to make conditional grants of large-size blocks of land, under sufficient guarantees, to associations or Co-operative Societies formed for the purpose and to foster the enterprise by granting financial help on sufficient security and by bringing within the reach of such bodies the expert advice at the disposal of Government. Similar schemes have been in operation for some years in Burma with results reported to be beneficial. The Director of Agriculture, who was asked to formulate the details of the scheme and to place it before the Economic Development Board for its opinion, has just submitted his proposals with the remarks of that Board. Government hope to take the matter up for consideration at an early date.

11. The working of the revised Rules issued under the Land Improvement and Agricultural Loans Regulation, IX of 1094, some of the beneficial features of which were explained in paragraph 6 of my Address last year, has been wholly gratifying. As a result of these Rules, the number of applications for agricultural loans rose from 56 in 1096 to 474 in 1097, and as many as 209 applications were granted, covering a sum of Rs. 96, 236, the budgeted allotment being Rs. 1,00,000. The same sum of Rs. 1 lakh has been repeated for the purpose of these loans during the current year and it is understood that a sum of Rs. 32,000 has been advanced up

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to the end of Dhanu. Bonds executed by the sureties of the borrowers of these loans have been exempted from the payment of stamp duty, and applications for loans up to a limit of Rs. 200 have been similarly exempted from the payment of court fees.

12. Irrigation and Drainage.—The work of the special officer appointed for expediting the conversion of dry lands into wet within the area commanded by the Kodayar channels was completed by the close of 1097. As a result of his exertions, an extent of 323 acres of dry land was converted into wet within that area, and a further extent of 453 acres already converted into wet was brought to book. The special officer has submitted certain schemes for the opening of distributary channels in the upper reaches of the commanded area, and for the utilisation of the surplus and seepage water that now runs waste into the sea for the benefit of lands at the tail-end, and the Government look up to the Land Revenue and the Public Works Departments to investigate these schemes and devise measures for utilising this water to the fullest extent.

13. You may remember that the Irrigation Regulation, III of 1072, was recently revised so as to admit of the formation of boards for entrusting to popular agencies some of the functions contemplated by that Regulation. The Rules for the formation of such boards, which were promised in paragraph 7 of my Address last year, have now been issued, and the preliminary steps for the creation of Irrigation Boards in the Kodayar area are in progress. A Central Board is to be constituted for the area commanded by the Kodayar channels, together with a block board for each of the 107 blocks comprised thereunder. The Dewan Peishkar and the Executive Engineer will be the President and the Vice-President, respectively, of the Central Board, while the remaining 13 members of that board will all be elected non-officials, each representing one of the 13 groups into which the irrigation blocks are divided. Every block board will be composed of not less than 5 and not more than 7 members—all elected—one of whom will be the President of that board. The Central Board is empowered to make recommendations regarding the dates of opening and closing the Kodayar reservoir and channels, the supply of water to the several major tanks and channels, the distribution of water among the several blocks, the measures calculated to bring the maximum extent of land under cultivation within the commanded area, and all matters generally tending to enhance the utility and successful working of irrigation under the Kodayar Scheme. The block boards in their turn will see that the water received by the respective blocks is fairly and equitably distributed, advise the ryots as to the crops to be grown with reference to the time and quantity of the supply of water, maintain the field distributaries in repair, and also improve and extend them, instruct the ryots not to encroach upon or tamper with irrigation works, and attend generally to all other matters that may be necessary for ensuring the successful irrigation of the block. Government trust that the effective system of local self-government in the matter of irrigation in the Kodayar area now to be inaugurated would be a source of all-round and far-reaching benefit to the ryots of that area and enable them to realise in full the manifold advantages to be derived from the project.

14. A sum of Rs. 68,500 was allotted for minor irrigation works in 1097, and that allotment has been further raised to Rs. 84,400 during the current year. The vexed question of the respective responsibilities of the State and the *ayakatdar* in regard to the restoration and maintenance of minor irrigation works in Nanjanad and Edanad has now been finally solved. So far as the improvement of minor irrigation works in the Vilavankod and Neyyattinkara taluks is concerned, Rules 2 and 3 of the Rules issued under the Irrigation Regulation are being amended, so as to enable the Government to recover one-half of the cost of restoration payable by the ryots interested, free of interest and in ten annual instalments commencing from the first day of the official year succeeding that on which the work is completed. The subsequent maintenance of the works so repaired will, of course, rest with the ryots concerned under Section 13 of the Irrigation Regulation, and to render this maintenance effective, Irrigation Boards will be created as in the case of South

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